DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 383 802 UD 030 473

AUTHOR Miron, Louis F.; St. John, Edward P.
TITLE "Situated" School Restructuring: Contrasting Case Studies of Two Urban Schools.
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 42p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; College School Cooperation; Disadvantaged Youth; *Educational Change; Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; High Risk Students; Participative Decision Making; *School Restructuring; *Social Problems; *Teacher Attitudes; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Accelerated Schools; *New Orleans Public Schools LA

ABSTRACT

The broader social issues (poverty, illiteracy, health care, single parent families) of school reform in urban settings are explored in a paper divided into four parts. The first examines the impact of urbanization on the conditions of schools in the inner city. Part two analyzes the value assumptions embedded in both the first and second waves of educational reform. Part three describes the research methods used for this study, and part four describes and interprets the results of two case studies of urban elementary schools in New Orleans (Louisiana) that undertook major school restructuring. These two schools implemented the Accelerated Schools Process (ASP), a restructuring process aimed at bringing at-risk students into the mainstream. The concrete school restructuring processes used in these schools are characterized as "situated" school restructuring. The authors served as university facilitators for the restructuring, collaborating with the ASP project team from Stanford University. During the first year of the project, surface evidence indicated that both schools had successfully implemented project milestones, but there were major differences beneath the surface in how teachers in the two schools felt about the change process. The community empowerment process adds substantially to the complexities and level of effort required in a school restructuring process in the urban social context. Interventionists and school personnel are confronted by a set of moral dilemmas owing to the pervasive influence of both corporate and community interests in the restructuring process. Unless they can reach a shared understanding of how these values can enhance the restructuring process, they may not be able to contend with the conflicts that surface as part of the process. (Contains 50 references.) (SLD)

# 'Situated' School Restructuring: Contrasting Case Studies of Two Urban Schools

Louis F. Miron, Ph.D.
Edward P. St. John, Ed.D.
College of Education
University of New Orleans
(504) 286-6169
E-mail: lfmiron@aol.com

'Situated' School Restructuring:
Contrasting Case Studies of Two Urban Schools

Today, there is much discussion of the impact of school reform on teaching and learning. A decade has passed since the National Commission on Excellence in Education, in its landmark A Nation at Risk report, described the nation's public schools as "a rising tide of mediocrity" (NCEE 1983,p.5). Various studies during the 1980s have documented the exhaustive production of reform programs at all levels of the system--federal, state, and local. Research groups, such as the Center for Policy Research in Education (Clune1989), have sought to actually quantify the impact of reform activities on such outcome measures as student achievement and curriculum change.

The bulk of reform initiatives has been concentrated at the state level. By and large state reforms have either bypassed urban schools and school districts (Levin 1988) or the special conditions facing these schools (Boyd 1989; Miron 1990; Kozol 1991; Davis & McCaul 1991) have made it difficult to implement changes in ways that are meaningful to principals, teachers, students and parents in inner city schools on a day-to-day basis. The national school reform movement has failed to address the underlying social issues which pervade inner city schools.

This article seeks to fill this gap. It addresses the broader social issues (poverty, illiteracy, health care, single parent families) of school reform activity in urban settings. It is divided into four parts: part one examines the impact of urbanization on the

conditions of schools in the inner city; part two analyzes the value assumptions embedded in both the first and second "waves" of educational reform; part three describes the research methods used for this study; part four describes and interprets the results of two case studies of urban schools in New Orleans, which undertook major school restructuring. These two schools implemented the "Accelerated Schools Process" (ASP), a restructuring process aimed at bringing "at-risk" students into the educational mainstream.

We used throughout the paper the terms "reform" and "restructuring." We distinguish between the broad ideological goals of the national educational reform movement and the specific school restructuring processes operating locally. Our contention is that the problematic social contexts of urban schools make difficult school reform of any kind , whether broadly or narrowly defined. The article examines the concrete school restructuring process principals and teachers employed in two inner city schools. We characterize these processes as "situated" school restructuring. Both of the schools selected for the study were inner city schools included in a major school restructuring program, the ASP. The interpretation focuses on the reasons for variability in the success of these school restructuring processes in the urban context. The paper concludes with the implications for practitioners bent on achieving school restructuring in similar settings.

## 'Situated' School Restructuring in the Inner City

Social, economic, and demographic changes in the inner city during the past two decades have left schools located in such surroundings barely able to cope with the educational needs of the underclass (Wilson 1987; Kozol 1991). Federal policies designed to

ameliorate human suffering for inhabitants of urban centers have had only marginal impact (Lemann 1991). For example, between 1950 and 1983, the percentage of single mothers rose from 26% to 43% for black women and from 12% to 29% for white women. Exacerbating the worsening conditions in the inner city were the budget cuts during the New Federalism, which produced reductions in subsidies for low income housing by 25% (Jacob 1988). The largest increases resulted from single mothers living in the inner city. In 1982, the poverty rate of for black and Hispanic female headed families was 56.2% and 55.4% respectively. Overall poverty levels rose by 12% in the inner city between 1970 and 1980. The poverty rate among children is 25%, as one of every four children was born to a poor family in 1992 (Children's Defense Fund 1992). In the five largest cities, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit and Philadelphia, the population living in poverty areas increased by 40%, despite a decrease in population of 9% (Wilson 1987, pp. 70-71).

These data are confirmed at the local level and underscore that in certain economically distressed areas, the situation can be much worse. For example, in New Orleans, the Children's Defense Fund (1992) reports that over 46% of the city's children lives below the poverty line. A closer look at some of the empirical data reveals that the economic conditions of the cities exacerbate social problems in the schools, making the meaning of reform in the urban context problematic.

Our case studies portray the plight of inner city teachers in New Orleans who routinely had to purchase handsoap, classroom supplies, and other essentials for their students during a bitter teachers' strike in 1990. Teachers frequently complained that

students came to school unprepared to learn; but the problems associated with the lack of necessities such as children's shoes make it difficult to maintain even the minimum of academic expectations for their students. In New York City, Freedman (1990) reported that, on average, students in poor neighborhood junior high schools spent less than twenty minutes per year with guidance counselors to discuss high school options.

Educational reform does not occur in a social and historical vacuum. Popkewitz (1991) argues that educational reform is shaped by historical power relations and the means by which groups define, acquire, and use knowledge. In the inner city, the issues of race, gender, ethncity and social class have profoundly influenced the form and content of school reform (Fine 1990; Boyd 1989; Levin 1988). School reform in the urban context is "situated" (Apple 1985; Giroux 1983) historically within unequal social and power relations that are embedded in the interconnections among ethnicity, race, gender, and class. As documented above, educational reform has largely bypassed members of minority groups; moreover, the ideological underpinnings of the reform movement nationwide has ignored the "dislocations" in the inner city (Wilson 1987). Put simply, black students (as well as other minorities) have achieved at significantly lower levels than their white counterparts (although some gains have been made) for black students (The Council of Great City Schools 1992); and lower socioeconomic groups have generally not fared well under the reform banner (Levin 1988; Kozol 1991).

The ideology of educational reform in the urban context is inextricably tied to the historical development of public education in cities (Tyack 1974). We argue that, in order to understand the

contemporary processes of school restructuring in the urban context, we must situate these processes "relationally" (Apple 1985), linking them to the historical development of cities (Katz 1971). While the targets of broad educational reform have frequently been the poor and minorities (who are viewed as being a drain on the economy), reform ideologies such as school "excellence" and "choice" often unintentionally have negative consequences for these groups. For example, state reform initiatives designed to lower the teacher-pupil ratio necessitate the use of portable classrooms to house students whose districts cannot afford to build new classrooms or to hire additional teachers (Miron 1990). As less funding is available to support reform in central city schools (First & Miron 1991; Hugg & Miron 1990), what we characterize as "ideological strategies" emerge from business groups which appeal to educators because of their perceived low cost and corporate support.

Since the inequalities of educational outcomes are strongly correlated with race and class (Garibaldi et al.,1988; Jencks, 1972), broad reform strategies may exacerbate these inequalities. School reform initiatives such as "effective schools" and university intervention can work; however, the impact of inequalities associated with race and class on reform makes it less probable that these measures will succeed in inner city schools, unless the broader social issues in the urban context (which we documented in this first section of this article) are addressed.

Many broad educational reform proposals are built upon mainstream societal assumptions such as all students will be able to take advantage of a precollege high school curriculum.[1] Despite the social realities of the inner city described above, the

ideological thrust of the school restructuring movement nationwide is to build change in schools around traditional middle class assumptions which historically have tended to ignore these social realities. We trace the origins of these value assumptions in the national school reform movement.

## The Ideological Strategies of National Educational Reform

Nationwide, the educational reform movement has its ideological roots in corporate restructuring, which has placed a value premium on eliminating bureaucracy, encouraging participatory management and entrepreneurship (Miron 1992; Osborne & Gaebler 1992; Hill & Bonan 1991; First & Miron 1991; Apple 1985). Large school districts in Dade County, Florida, Columbus, Ohio, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana have experimented with site-based management. Emerging school-based change models such as the ASP (see Levin 1988) focus on systematically changing an entire school culture by coupling teacher empowerment with responsibility to enable classroom teachers to help make policy decisions over the curriculum and other issues. While many of the restructuring initiatives such as site-based management have been implemented in large urban school districts, they have largely ignored the traditional isolationism among classroom teachers (SEDL, Issues,1992) and the historical unequal power relations in schools (Cherryhomes 1988; Apple1985; 1979).

Moreover, such proposals have also been based upon traditional middle class values, which assumes the feasibility of parental involvement at school sites, adequate financial resources, and a

school and community climate for learning which is rid of social discord. However, as Apple's (1985) work cautions us, the conditions in the inner cities are rife with structural problems such as dramatically unequal power relations; inequalities based on race, gender, ethnicity and social class; a low tax base--all of which, if not critically understood and acted upon (McLaren 1989), may serve to undermine the broad, noble goals of educational reform.

Our review of the corporate restructuring literature (see Miron,1995 forthcoming; and 1992) indicates that three ideological strategies specifically characterize school restructuring in the urban context. These strategies are: shared-governance, empowerment, and intervention. The first two ideological strategies aim to alter schools from within the school organization. The third strategy,intervention, prevails when the first two fail to meet the (largely business) goals of school restructuring (see Cibulka, Reed, & Wong 1992).

Shared-governance

One of the hallmarks of the school restructuring movement is the call to shared-governance. Led by private, professional and non-profit interests, the move to embrace shared-governance in public education derives in part from the perception that government-funded schools cannot adequately safeguard the affairs of the public-- defined as quality instruction for students-- (Minutes of the Metropolitan Area Committee 1990). The prospects for additional revenues to support public education are dim. Thus, during a time of fiscal crisis, soliciting financial and volunteer resources from business and community non-profit groups is an attractive strategy for public school educators. Garnering these

resources usually implies a commitment to alter governance arrangements in the school (see Miron & Wimpelberg,1989).

Experiments in shared-governance in education therefore derive in part from the recognition that funding for government has fallen dramatically in the past decade, and during a national recession, is unlikely to increase. For example, in the city of New Orleans, the City Council has cut the operating budget by 25% since the outset of the New Federalism; and the number of city employees has fallen from a peak of nearly 10,000 in 1979 to under 6,000 today (Ryan 1994). Moreover, many cities have stretched their taxing capacity to the fullest; and taxpayers are reluctant to approve new taxes for the public sector. Thus, shared-governance models (which employ an ideological strategy of private-public collaboration and reliance on volunteerism and corporate goodwill) flourish because they are touted as potentially reducing cost (Miron 1992). Streamlining or eliminating the expensive bureaucratic apparatus normally associated with centralized public sector programs is intuitively appealing to educators, parents, and business groups and civic organizations (Miron & Brooks,1993).

There are myriads of examples of shared-government models ranging from the extreme of community control to school advisory councils. The most popular form of self-governance in public education is school-based management. One of the principal values underpinning school-based management is the belief in empowerment.

## Empowerment

Linked to the concept of shared-governance in public education is empowerment--professional, parental, student and community.

"Second wave" reform strategies emphasized the professionalization of teachers (Berry & Ginsberg 1989) with teacher empowerment at the core. This term has been loosely defined (Levin 1988); however, it generally refers to affording teachers the authority and responsibility to make decisions over matters that affect their professional lives. The most important of these decisions is the say-so over the curriculum and the choice of textbooks.

Parental empowerment has taken the popular form of parental involvement in schools. Most studies of school effectiveness have found positive correlations between student achievement and parental involvement (Comer 1980); however, despite low adult literacy levels in the inner cities, parental involvement programs rarely focus on the need for parents to acquire the skills necessary to engage their children in the learning process or the needs of parents to become co-learners with their children. Rather, parental involvement usually connotes parents aiding teachers with such family responsibilities as discipline and homework.

Community empowerment models are rare, with important exceptions such as the Chicago community control initiative which fostered the election of hundreds of community boards who have the authority to actually hire and fire principals, administer school budgets, and choose curriculum and textbooks. Recent anecdotal information of the implementation of community control in the Chicago public schools have focused on the lack of parent and community training in decision-making which have hampered the work of the community councils in Chicago (Meeting of Harvard Principals Center 1992).

Both shared governance and empowerment are ideological

strategies that seek to restructure schools (alter their organizational patterns and modes of teaching and learning) from within the school community (Crowson 1992; Levin 1988; Comer 1980). Conversely, as an ideological restructuring strategy, intervention looks to outside agents in the school community for the impetus to change. In this study, principals in each of the two schools differed in their reliance on inside (Barth 1991) or outside change agents. In addition, the authors served as university-based school interventionists in the ASP process (see below).

### Outside Intervention

As demographic changes filter their way into public school classrooms, reform advocates in the newsmedia, social service agencies and even within the mayor's office, look to outside intervention as a catalyst for change. Frustrated with the pace of school reform in cities, and beleaguered by a recalcitrant state and local school bureaucracy (First & Miron 1991), the reform coalition has sought to bypass the education establishment altogether. School voucher proposals have long been touted as a means to enable parents to skirt around attendance boundaries; and, now, these plans have found allies in the academic and research circles (Chubb & Moe 1991) who cite the benefits of creating a "market based" approach to school reform. School choice is the most visible illustration of the move by outside forces to intervene in the reform process.

## Research Approach

Two research approaches were used in this study. First, since the two schools were involved in a school restructuring process in which the authors were involved as university facilitators, this

paper presents the reflective analysis of our own experiences as interventionists. Second, both schools have been the subject of independent case study research (Davidson 1992) which was available for our study. Our purposes were two: (a) to reflect upon our own experience as university interventionists in school restructuring in the urban context; and (b) to investigate whether or not the 'situated' character of reform affected the successful implementation of the ASP process in the two inner city schools.

## Urban Intervention

The two schools were selected as sites for the pilot-testing of the ASP, a comprehensive school restructuring process that has gained national acclaim (e.g., it was one of only a few restructuring initiatives cited in America 2000). The authors were initially trained as facilitators by the Stanford project team that had developed the process, then assisted the Stanford project team in delivering on-site training in the selected pilot schools. In addition, the authors were site facilitators for the restructuring process for the 1990-91 academic year and the fall semester of 1991.

The two schools were selected from a group of 20 New Orleans schools that applied to the program. One school was selected from the applications based on a set of criteria developed for the program. School "A" received some additional money beyond the initial training support from the project. The second school (School "B") was selected based on the recommendations of the school district's Chapter I Director. Additional first year resources for School B were provided by the Parish, through Chapter I, and from a private corporation sponsoring the project. The two school had

equal resources, about $10,000 each. The authors were the primary interventionists working with the two schools. We collaborated with the Stanford project team on the summer training program, provided inservice training during the schools years, and provided technical assistance with many aspects of the school restructuring process, such as meeting with planning teams, providing leads on external resources that could be used in the restructuring process, and communicating with school leaders about the restructuring process. Our observations and reflections based on our experience with the schools has been used in this analysis.

## Case Studies

Case studies of the two schools were available to the authors for the present analysis. The cases were developed in the fall of 1991, based on interviews conducted during the spring semester of 1991 (Davidson 1992). Traditional case study techniques--interviews, document reviews, and on-site observations--were used to develop the case studies. The case study researcher consulted with the principals to select a diverse set of teachers for interviews. Interviewees included both those who had attended the ASP summer training and those who had not. Additionally, all the planning documents developed by the schools as part of the accelerated schools process were available for analysis. The researchers also made numerous site visits to the schools for observations and interviews.

In the interviews for the case studies, the interviewees were asked about their perceptions of the school before the start of the school restructuring process and at the present time. Questions were asked about the school along five dimensions: relations with

the central office; school leadership; teacher involvement; parent involvement; and the foci of pedagogical processes in the school. Questions in each area considered their status before the intervention and the status at the time of the interview, after nearly a year of implementation. Interviews were conducted by an advanced graduate student who had not been directly involved in the intervention processes in these schools. All interviewees had an opportunity to review their transcripts. Thus, the case studies provided a reasonably objective measure of whether participants' perceptions about whether the restructuring had resulted in meaningful changes. The case studies were examined by the authors as part of the development of this article.

## Research Questions

Our analysis focused on five research questions that emanated from the literature on urban school reform, discussed above. First, how successful were these schools in their initial restructuring activities? On the surface we were interested in whether the process had been successfully implemented. Like most school restructuring processes, the ASP includes the following components: an assessment process where school and community members critically examine their school ("taking stock"); a process to involve the school community in setting a shared vision; and a process of restructuring the school into teams ("cadres") to address the most critical needs of the school. We were interested in whether these aspects of school restructuring had been successfully implemented. On a deeper level we were concerned with whether or not members of the school community perceived the changes as meaningful, which was judged based on an analysis

of interviews.

Second, how did the approach used to reorganize the governance process influence the restructuring activities ? In the analysis we were interested in taking a step beyond the espoused theory of accelerated schools to examine how the approaches actually used to change the governance of the schools influenced their success with the ASP school restructuring process. In this analysis we were interested whether there was evidence of specific social issues germane to the urban context which influenced the success of the process used to change governance. The ASP concepts had initially been tested in environments that were substantially different than urban New Orleans. Therefore,we were interested in what contextual factors facilitated or inhibited reform. Additionally, we were interested in how the actions of administrators in the schools either increased or decreased their ability to deal with these factors.

Third, how did the corporate support influence the authority structure governing the restructuring process? Given the dependence of school districts on corporate funding, it is important to examine how corporations influence the restructuring process. Our analysis considered how the schools reconciled the influence of the corporation supporting the reform, including the embedded philosophy of the Accelerated School Process, with the policies and regulatory methods used in the school district.

Fourth, does parental and community empowerment influence the success of the school restructuring process? While the accelerated schools literature (Hopfenberg, Levin, and Associates 1993) places a value on parental and community involvement in

schools, the limited research on accelerated schools indicates that this aspect of the process is difficult for some schools to realize (Davidson 1992). Therefore in this inquiry we were interested in the relationships between parental and community involvement and the ultimate success of the school restructuring process in the two inner city schools we studied.

Finally, what aspects of the university facilitation process were most successful in facilitating school restructuring? We were also interested in reflecting on our own role as university-based school interventionists to see which aspects of our work were most successful. In particular, we focused on the questions related to how external interventionists can facilitate the process 'situating' the school restructuring process in the urban context. Fortunately, the case studies gave us some independent insights to supplement our own perceptions gained from direct experience. Our analysis of these questions is organized into two parts. First, our analysis of the first two questions is organized into a section focusing on the restructuring process in the two schools. Second, our analyses of the remaining questions is organized into a section that explicitly considers how the ideologies of the reform process influenced this school restructuring process.

## Describing School Restructuring in the Urban Context

New Orleans is a difficult social context for any school restructuring process. The State of Louisiana ranks near the bottom on most national indicators of school quality, such as standardized test scores. As the largest urban area in the state, New Orleans represents an area of great social and economic need. The public

schools are almost exclusively minority and low income. There are a few magnet schools in the city that attract middle class whites and blacks throughout the entire city, usually in near equal racial numbers. Otherwise, the enrollment in the neighborhood elementary schools in the city is almost exclusively black and poor. These neighborhood schools serve mostly students who receive free and reduced lunch, as was the case with the two neighborhood elementary schools selected for the study.

To make matters worse for the schools and the project, there was a major teachers' strike in the fall of 1990. The initial training was completed in the summer of 1990, prior to the start of the fall semester. When school opened, the union called a strike, and many of the teachers who had participated in the ASP training (about half of the teachers in both schools), struck. Thus, the principals and university facilitating team were confronted by some very basic challenges at the outset of the school restructuring process.

## Understanding Success

Consideration of whether a school has successfully implemented a restructuring process involves both the surface issue of whether certain milestones were accomplished, as well as the deeper question of whether meaningful change really took root in the urban milieu. In our pilot project, both schools proceeded with implementation at about the same pace and accomplished the same milestones in the first year. After the strike, both schools assessed their strengths and weaknesses, developed visions statements and, about halfway through the second semester, organized into cadres (teams of teachers) that were addressing

critical issues. Thus, both schools successfully completed the project milestones for the first year, a superficial indicator of success.

The strike itself persisted halfway through the first semester and the hard feelings engendered by the strike extended beyond the settlement, which was dissatisfying for everyone. After the strike, there were deep divisions between striking and nonstriking faculty. In an effort to transcend these conditions, the university facilitators organized workshops on teamwork and conflict resolution for the entire staffs from both schools.

The case studies developed at the end of the first academic year provided insight into the extent of deep structural change in the two schools. On most of the indicators, school "A" showed evidence of meaningful change. From interviews and observations it became evident that: School "A" had started to initiate a more collaborative relationship with the central office; teachers in the school had experienced real changes in the principals' leadership style and gained more of a sense of involvement in decisionmaking in the school; and that parents had begun to become actively involved in the school (Davidson 1992). On the same dimensions, School "B" appeared to be in turmoil. Most teachers did not feel supported by the principal and a parents' group had actually requested a recall of the principal.

However, the reverse situation was evident in the curriculum. At the end of the first year, there was more evidence of change in the focus of pedagogy to a child centered approach at school "B". At the urging of the principal many teachers in the school had begun whole language approaches in reading and writing instruction and were using math manipulatives. However, these innovations had not

been selected by the curriculum cadre (the team of teachers working on curriculum and instruction). Instead, the curriculum cadre had decided to get involved in a districtwide multicultural program, which became the focus of their planning. In contrast school "A" illustrated few signs of curricular change during the 1990-'91 school year (Davidson 1992).

By the end of the fall semester of 1991, these differences began to manifest themselves more directly. School "A" developed a more collaborative atmosphere, which had begun to spill over into all aspects of school activity. There were experiments underway with new approaches to the teaching of reading and new Afrocentric programs. In contrast, the turmoil at School "B" grew worse, with the principal resisting many of the plans developed by the teacher cadres. A collaborative steering process had developed at School "A", consistent with ASP methodologies, but not at School "B". At the end of the 1991 fall semester, the project team decided to declare a moratorium at School "B", until some of the deeper issues in the school were resolved.

These cases clearly illustrate differences between surface and deep structural change (Miron & Elliott 1990;1994). During the first year of the project, the surface evidence indicated both schools had successfully implemented the project milestones. But there were major differences beneath the surface in how teachers in the two schools felt about the change process.

## The Restructuring Process

Because of the differences between the two schools, we decided to dig beneath the surface to explore differences in how the two urban schools approached the task of altering the school

governance process, vis a vis their encounter with generic reform models. Three factors seem to distinguish the schools. These were "meaningful inquiry" (see below), conflict resolution, and changes in leadership style.

*Evidence of Meaningful Inquiry*

A recent study of two schools that had successfully restructured found that meaningful inquiry at both the school and classroom level appeared integral to the change process (St. John, Miron & Davidson 1992). Personnel from both of these schools were trained in and attempted to implement the Accelerated School inquiry process, which emphasizes collaborative problem solving and pilot-testing of solutions. There were substantial differences in the degree of success that school "A" and school "B" initially had with the model.

At School "A", this process began to take hold in the Spring of 1991 when the cadres were first formed. Each cadre began to struggle with the complexity of understanding what might work better at their school. When the cadres came up with solutions to test, the principal let the steering committee and school as a whole decide on what to endorse. Each of the cadres came up with plans. The curriculum cadre was the slowest, perhaps because there were substantial unaddressed needs in this area and perhaps because the principal was a cadre member. In any event, each of the cadres took responsibility for their own planning processes and for assessing the results of their planned experiments.

At School "B," the inquiry process got bogged down. The Cadres would develop plans and the principal would return them without allowing for consideration of their plans by a steering committee or the school as a whole. When asked why, he indicated that the cadres

had not gone through all the steps of the inquiry process. In the fall of 1991, we began to work more closely with School "B" attending cadre meetings, encouraging steering committee meetings and meetings of the school as a whole. This did result in the pilot testing of some new projects in parent outreach and student discipline and self-esteem; but it was a situation of "too little, too late." The school was still deeply divided and some of the cadres even quit using their planning time to plan. Thus, in our view, meaningful teacher inquiry,where teachers collectively and systematically engage in problem solving and reflective practice, is one critical aspect of successful restructuring. However, it is not easy to implement this process in an urban setting, since it requires making other fundamental changes in the school and its relationship to its surrounding community.

*Conflict Resolution*

The strike surfaced divisions that complicated the school restructuring process. In both schools, the strike accentuated longstanding racial, social, economic and other deep divisions between groups of faculty. In our view as university interventionists, these divisions needed to be resolved before the restructuring process could take hold, which is the reason why special team building workshops were offered for both schools after the strike. Variations in the ability of the school communities to resolve these underlying conflicts seem to have had a direct influence on the success of the school restructuring process.

In School "A", where the principal and most of the teachers were black, many of the teachers who had gone out on strike had

attended the summer training and were perhaps a little closer to the principal before and after the strike. During the strike, the principal came to rely on teachers who had not been as close to her in the past. At the supplemental training session on team building, the teachers were able to talk about their differences as they practiced new ways of communicating. This special training, coupled with the fact that the principal was sensitive to healing the divisions when she reinitiated the restructuring process with all of her faculty, created an atmosphere that not only resolved conflicts that surfaced during the strike, but also helped heal divisions that predated the strike.

At School"B," the strike also surfaced deep tensions present in the school. A larger percentage of the teachers at School "B" attended the summer training session and, thus, teachers with Accelerated School training split into two camps--those who struck and those who chose to cross the picket line. The divisions in School "B" at first appeared to be racial. The principal and many of the younger and newer teachers who did not support the strike were mostly white, while many of the striking teachers were black and had been at the school longer. The special training session for School "B" was not as successful as the striking teachers could not transcend incidents that happened during the strike, especially in confrontations with the principal.

After the strike, the principal, who recognized the divisions, made some efforts to get representation of both factions in his initial steering committee. The intervention team came to the school on several occasions to discuss implementation issues, to suggest ways of healing divisions, and to provide supplemental inservice training. However, none of these efforts worked. The

principal simply had a leadership style that made it difficult for him to accept and support others' ideas. At the end of the first year, it was apparent that most classroom teachers did not support the principal (Davidson 1992). In spite of intensive efforts during the fall of the second year to work with the school on the continued implementation of the restructuring process, only one or two teachers still supported the principal by the end of the fall 1991 semester.

*Changes in Leadership Style*

It is difficult to be successful as a principal/middle manager in a New Orleans public school without accepting the authority structure in the school system. People who can accept, or at least tolerate, control systems with a strong centralized orientation (see Crowson 1992) are most likely to become appointed and to persist as principals. Thus, meaningful restructuring in this context involves a change in the principal's leadership style. This means changing from being "in control" of school decisions, to being a facilitator of meaningful inquiry which helped empower teachers. In these two schools, as indicated above, there was a great deal of variability in both the willingness and ability of each principal to make these changes.

The principal in School "A," an African American woman, had wanted to make changes in the school for years but did not really know how. In spite of the fact that there were divisions among the faculty, she desired to find ways to get everyone involved, specifically both the white and African American faculty. A spirit of community evolved in the school, in spite of lingering differences among faculty. The principal was ready to change and

ASP became a vehicle for making the change.

These changes in leadership style appeared more difficult for the principal at School "B." He understood and seemed to believe in the principles of empowerment, at least at an espoused level. However, giving up control was very difficult. Initially the principal kept turning back faculty decisions because they had not followed the entire inquiry process. Once some changes began to happen, he had trouble allowing faculty to actually "pilot" these strategies. He would often seem to explode at faculty who were acting on decisions ratified by a committee consisting of the entire school. Gradually, most teachers quit trying, which destroyed the restructuring process.

## Interpreting Urban School Restructuring

The underlying corporate ideological forces in the reform movements emphasis on shared authority, empowerment, and outside intervention--had an influence on the school restructuring processes in the case study schools. The influence of each of these values is examined below.

### Shared Authority

School reform has become a mechanism through which school districts have solicited corporate support. Implicit in this strategy lies an assumption that both entities--the supporting corporations and the school district--have a role in the governance of the reform.

#### *The Corporate Connection*

The ASP intervention process was subsidized by a national corporation which was generous in providing both human and financial resources to assist the schools. In addition to making a financial grant to the university, and providing external funding to

the schools to employ in their restructuring strategies, the sponsoring corporation also provided supplemental gifts to the schools. Additionally, both schools were also successful at obtaining surrounding businesses to donate time and services. However, there was also evidence that the tensions in the schools influenced the attitudes of corporate sponsors.

In particular, representatives of the sponsoring corporation, who were publicly invested in facilitating the success of the ASP process in each school, made critical judgments about the schools. When national corporate sponsors visited School "B" during the second year of the restructuring project, teachers discussed the racial tensions in the school. The national corporate representative literally reversed her position regarding the extension of grant support of School "B" after her field visit to the school.

However, at School "B," activities in this area were slowed initially by the principal's reluctance to approve school-based plans and, ultimately, by the underlying conflict in the school. Early in the fall semester, the community relations cadre began planning for a series of new activities. The cadre concluded that the basic problem was that parents did not feel welcome. A parent's breakfast was held and it had a reasonable turnout. Other efforts were made to get parents to observe and volunteer in the school and in the classroom. These efforts resulted in some modest gains, but even the most involved parents were aware of divisions in the school and the lingering problem that most parents in the community simply did not feel welcome in the school. Many teachers did not cooperate with these formal, planned strategies, although some maintained good relations with groups in the community, for example, the NAACP. Thus, success in building (and sustaining) constructive

relations with parents, and other community members, was somewhat mixed and hampered by underlying racial and social conflicts in the school.

These developments provide an interesting juxtaposition to our analysis of the relative success of the implementation of the ASP in each of the two schools. In particular, the classroom teachers' ability to resolve the racial tensions that emerged during the strike influenced not only the capacity of the schools to reorganize their governance processes, but also the willingness of parents and businesses to support each school (see below). This lends empirical support to the argument that a unity of purpose is essential to the successful implementation of school restructuring (Hopfenberg, Levin, & Associates, 1993). It also shed light on the relationship between the schools' capacity to build a unity of purpose (from within) and their prospects for building and maintaining external support. In School "A," the school-as-a-whole committee was unified in its aims to substantially involve the neighborhood and the broader school community to seek corporate support, which seemed to influence the involvement of these groups. In contrast, at School "B," the deep racial tensions in the school influenced parents and corporations to withdraw their commitment to the ASP in particular and to the school in general. These strikingly different strategic responses to shared authority are embedded in each of the principals' relationship to the administrators in central office.

*The Central Office*

Orleans Parish had systematically cutback on its supervision of schools in the decade prior to the start of the accelerated schools project. The district maintained a role in selecting textbooks, but had limited staff capabilities to supervise instructional practices.

The two principals interpreted these conditions differently, which influenced their implementation of the ASP.

In School"A," the principal became a member of the curriculum cadre after the school governance process was restructured. The cadre decided to focus its efforts on instructional innovations, letting the cadre choose the challenge area and select strategies for pilot testing. This approach lead to several innovations, especially in language instruction and in multi-cultural education.

In contrast, the principal at School "B" responded in a manner that was more consistent with the old supervisory role of central office (interviews with district staff revealed that he was held a position as curriculum supervisor). He did not get directly involved in a cadre. Instead he tacitly assumed his former role as curriculum supervisor, recommending innovations directly to teachers, circumventing the accelerated school's inquiry process. This approach undermined the realization of the empowerment and unity principles espoused by the ASP.

Thus, the way the principals and teachers interpreted the school district's policies on curriculum and instruction had an influence on the eventual success of the ASP. In particular, the way they approached the curricular change process was heavily influenced by the way they individually interpreted school policy on instruction. The principals and teachers in both schools continued to use the district selected texts, but there were major differences in the ways they approached innovations in the instructional process. One school used the cadre-based inquiry process to foster change, while the principal in the other school circumvented this process by maintaining his supervisory authority over instruction, a form of authority which refelected his past experience working in central

office. However, it should be noted that the school district had very little direct influence on the accelerated school process. The decision to pull the plug on School "B" was made by the corporation, without consultation from the school district.

The dependence of school districts on corporate support for the restructuring process changes the pattern of authority in the governance of school undergoing change. Because corporations provide funds, their decisions about what to fund and how long to fund it have an influence on what reforms are initiated and how long they are maintained. This arrangement carries with it a change in the authority structure. In this study we found that the way school personnel interpreted district policy had an influence both on their success with the restructuring process and their continued inclusion in the funded project.

Community empowerement

The two schools were also distinctive from each other in the ways they approached the issues related to community empowerment. Two issues are separately examined below: parental involvement and the intervention process.

*Parental involvement*

The ability to initiate and maintain viable partnerships with parents appears to be another factor that is critical to successful school restructuring in an inner city school. Parental empowerment identified by each of the school communities as a critical challenge was a result of their taking stock process. In both schools cadres were formed to plan for improvement in this area at both schools.

At school "A," these efforts seem to have made a quick

difference. For example, the community involvement cadre quickly formed a "Dad's Club" and the committee recruited a permanent core of dedicated volunteers who were welcomed in the classroom as well as called upon to volunteer labor. School "A" progressed from few, if any, permanent parent supporters to a core group of 30 parents who volunteer regularly at the school and who maintain a voice in school policy,such as curriculum decisions.

However, at school "B," activities in this area were slowed initially by the principal's reluctance to approve school-based plans and, ultimately, by the underlying conflict in ther school. Early in the fall semester, the community relations cadre began planning for a series of new activities. The cadre concluded that the basic problem was that parents did not feel welcome in the school. The group sponsored a breakfast for parents, and it had a reasonable turnout. Other attempts were made to get parents to observe and to volunteer in the school and in the classroom. These efforts resulted in some modest gains in the relationships between the facutly and the parents. However, even the most involved parents were aware of the racial and ideological divisions in the school and the lingering problem that most parents in the neighborhood simply did feel welcome in the school. Many teachers did not cooperate with these formal, planned strategies, although some maintained good public relations with groups in the community-at-large , in partiuclar the NACCP. In fact, as a result of these relationships the parents (and some of the teachers) formed a coalition that led to the resignation by the principal and to his eventual reassignment in the district. Thus, success in building (and sustaining) constructive relations with parents, and other community members, was very mixed and hampered by the underlying racial, ideological, and social

conflicts in the school.

*The Intervention Process*

Many of the school restructuring strategies cited in "America 2000" involve apparently successful collaboration between schools and universities. This project represents an attempt to replicate the ASP in a new, untested urban setting. Our experience as interventionists indicates that it is possible to successfully initiate a school restructuring process using the ASP methodology. However, achieving even moderate or mixed success in an urban setting witnessing fiscal and "organizational decline" (see Boyd 1989; & Crowson, 1992) requires moving beyond the importation of models.

When we began the ASP, we felt that a sound model was in place nationally, but that it would require adaptation in our urban environment. Fortunately, there have been improvements in the methodology and training for the ASP during the past two year, which increases the viability of the model. We have gained more insight into the ways university-based training centers need to adapt restructuring methodologies, using local knowledge, (see Allen-Haynes, 1993) in order to achieve even a modest level of success.

First, it is necessary to address social issues specific to the urban context(s). In our experience, there were deep divisions within the two schools we worked with, as well as between these schools and their surrounding neighborhoods. Building a unity of purpose, one of the paramount principles of the ASP, is, therefore, not a simple task. The ASP methodology are only now beginning to address these deep structural issues. The ability to identify and to resolve problems--to observe dysfunctional organizational

patterns, to have the capacity and the means to voice them publicly in school-wide community meetings, and to identify the ways and the means of altering these patterns (and healing racial and other divisions)--seems critical to the successful implementation of school restructuring, at least in this urban setting.

Second, any school restructuring process needs the capacity to adapt quickly to new conditions as they develop. When the strike started in New Orleans, it became immediately evident to us that we would need to be able to do something about the problem immediately. We took the initiative, by bringing new conflict resolution specialists to work with the faculty. These trainers had not completed the ASP training, but they did have expertise in conflict resolution, and team building in schools in the area, both of which were greatly needed at the time of the strike. If we had not been able to make this adjustment, or if we had simply waited too long to bring in the specialists, we may have been easily set back a year on the project.

Finally, the ability to engage in reflective dialogue about the ASP with other university interventionists and members of the school community is central to the facilitator role of university-based faculty and researchers. Public schools have a remarkable capacity to absorb new ideas without changing their basic patterns of organization, power, and social relations. Yet change along these dimensions seems to hold one of the keys to the sustained implementation of school restructuring. In our experience, both schools were successful at the superficial level of the start-up process of implementation. However, only one of the schools (School "A") was able to change its dysfunctional

organizational pattern and address the inequities in social structures (racism and the exclusion of parents, particularly African-American fathers). Thus, if we had not made and shared observations about deep structural issues (social and racial inequalities), we would have had less likelihood of success on this project. The urban context would have been too constraining.

## Conclusion: Implications for University Interventionists

It has been observed that "students in big cities suffer in ways that seem much more resistant to improvement than the educational woes of students in other settings" (Maeroff 1988, p. 636). Our analysis of the the school restructuring process provides insight both into why urban schools are resistant to reform and what has to happen for meaningful change to take hold and move towards institutionalization. Our conclusions focus both on structural issues in the restructuring process and the influence of ideology on this process.

Two types of deep structural problems appeared to contribute to dysfunctionalities in these urban schools. First, there were deep unresolved conflicts among factions of the faculty in both schools, which surfaced as a result of the strike. The ability of school leaders to initiate processes that helped to heal these differences was integral to starting a meaningful change process. Moreover, changes in leadership style that resulted in meaningful teacher empowerment and school level inquiry were necessary for the school restructuring process to take hold.

Second, both of these schools faced divisions between the school and its surrounding community. Local businesses and parents

alike tended to ignore the schools, which increased teachers' feelings of isolation and further limited their ability to acquire external support for innovation and change. If schools remain internally divided, it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to build better school/community relations. Our experience indicated that community representatives and parents are sensitive to divisions between factions within schools, which makes it difficult for them to get involved in the change process. For parents to become involved in solving school level problems, they not only need to feel welcome; they also need to feel that they are part of the solution.

If these underlying issues are not dealt with in the restructuring process, then it is likely that changes in curriculum and instruction will not take hold. Of the two schools examined here, one was immediately successful with the implementation of new curricular methods while the other was not. However, the school that did experience quick success also failed to deal with the deep structural problems, which left the school divided and isolated and caused the curriculum change process to bog down. In contrast, the teachers in the school that made slower improvements in teaching and learning paradoxically began the process of restructuring.

The contradictory ideological values embedded in the school reform movement seriously complicate the intervention process. When private corporations provide support for an intervention process, such as accelerated schools, they retain an ability to influence the continuation of the process. As deep structural problems surface during the school restructuring process, the corporate sponsor may be inclined to withdraw support. The predicament presents a moral dilemma for the interventionists and

school personnel. Should they keep a lid on the problems in an effort to maintain funding, or be open and candid? Our belief is that openness is essential, in spite of the risk, but this issue certainly merits further debate.

Moreover, the community empowerment process adds substantially to the complexities and level of effort required in a school restructuring process in the urban social context. It may be essential to involve parents in a meaningful way, as their moral support appears crucial to the success of the restructuring process.

Finally, interventionists and school personnel are confronted by a set of moral dilemmas owing to the pervasive influence of both corporate and community interests in the restructuring process. Unless they can reach a shared understanding of how these values can enhance the restructuring process, they may not be able to contend with the conflicts that surface as part of the process, a condition that emerged in one of the two schools examined here.

If these conditions noted above are pervasive in urban schools, and we believe that they are, then this would explain why most of the reform initiatives of the 1980s had no substantial effect in urban contexts. It seems possible for these schools to absorb new methods without changing some of the basic problems that inhibit meaningful school change. Hopefully, the ASP and other vehicles in the current wave of school reform will emphasize the resolution of deep structural problems in schools.

## Notes

* The authors wish to acknowledge the support of Professor Henry Levin of Stanford University, the Chevron Corporation and the staff of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project for their assistance in conducting the research for this article.

1. A nationally recognized program (The Taylor Plan) which began in New Orleans offers free college tuition to any high school student who can complete a precollege curriculum with a 2.5 G.P.A., earn a score of 20 on the American College Test and meet income requirements. Despite its financial appeal state higher education officials Louisiana report that many low income students, especially from inner city and rural schools are unable to take advantage of the offer because of poor academic preparation and a curriculum which has actually increased dropout rates.

## References


Allen-Haynes, L. (1993). School-university partnerships: A case study. Unpublished dissertation. University of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Apple, M. (1979). Ideology and curriculum. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Apple, M. (1985). Education and power. London: ARK Paperbacks.

Barth, R. (1991). Improving schools from within: Teachers, parents, and principals can make the difference. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Berry, B. & Ginsburg, R. (1989). Creating lead teachers: From policy to implementation. Phi Delta Kappan, 71 (8): 616-622.

Boyd, W. L. (1989). What makes ghetto schools work or not work. Paper presented to the conference on 'The Truly Disadvantaged." Northwestern University, Evanston Illinois.

Cherryholmes, C. (1988). Power and criticism. New York: Teachers College Press.

Children's Defense Fund. (1992). Child poverty data report. Washington: Children's Defense Fund.

Chubb, J. & Moe, T. (1991). Politics, markets and schools. Washington: Brookings Institution.

Cibulka,J, Reed, J., & Wong, K. (Eds). (1992). The politics of education in the United States. London: The Falmer Press.

Clune, W. (1989). The implementation and effects of high school graduation. First steps toward curricula Reform. Policy Briefs. Rutgers, N.J.: Center for Policy Research in Education.

Comer, J. P. (1980). School power. New York: The Free Press.

The Council of the Great City Schools. (1992). National urban education goals: Baseline indicators, 1990-1991.

Crowson, R. (1992). School Community Relations Under Reform. Berkeley: McCutchan.

Davis, B., & McCaul, E. (1991). The Emerging crisis: Current and projected status of children in the United States. Orono, ME: Institute for the Study of At-risk Students, University of Maine.

Davidson, B. (1992). Building school capacity to accelerate learning. Unpublished dissertation. University of New Orleans.

Fine, M. (1990). Wrapped too tight. Buffalo, N.Y. State University of New York Press.

First, P. F., & Miron, L.F. (1991). The social construction of adequacy. Journal of Law and Education, 20(4),421-444.

Freedman, S. G. (1990). Small victories: The real world of a teacher, her students, and their high school . New York: Harper and Row.

Garibaldi, A. et al. (1988). The black male in New Orleans: A moral and civic imperative. Monograph. New Orleans: Orleans Parish Schools.

Giroux, H. A. (1983). Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition. Boston: Bergin & Harvey.

Harvard Principals' Center Summer Training on School Leadership. (1992).

Hill, P. T., & Bonan, J. (1991). Decentralization and accountability in public education. Santa Monica: Rand Corp. R-4066.

Hopfenberg, W., Levin, H., & Associates. (1993). Accelerated schools resource guide. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hugg, P. & Miron, L.F. (1991). A hybrid theory of education reform. Loyola Law Review. 36(4),937-980.

Jacob, J.E. (1988). Black women and AIDS: Is knowledge enough? Paper presented at the American Psychological Association annual meeting, Atlanta.

Jencks, C. (1972). Inequality. New York: Basic Books.

Katz, M. B. (1971). Class, bureaucracy and schools. The illusion of educational change in America. New York: Prager.

Kozol, J. (1991). Savage inequalities. New York: Crown Press.

Lemann, N. (1990). The promised land. New York: Alfred E. Knopf.

Levin, H. L. (1988). Accelerated schools for at-risk students. CPRE Research Series RR-010. Stanford, CA: Center for Policy Research in Education, Stanford University.

Maeroff, G. (1988). Withered hopes, stillborn dreams: The dismal panorama of urban schools." Phi Delta Kappan. May, 633-638.

McLaren, P. (1989). Life in schools. New York: Longman.

Meeting of the Harvard Principal's Center. Cambridge, Ma. Summer, 1992.

Minutes of the Metropolitan Area Committee. Workshop on self-governance. (1990). New Orleans, La., November.

Miron, L.F. (1990). Portables and school reform: The urban context. Educational Facility Planner, 28(3), 11-13.

Miron, L.F. (1992). Corporate ideology and the politics of entrepreneurism in New Orleans. Antipode, 24(4), 263-288.

Miron, L.F. (1995). The social construction of urban education: Situating the crisis. Cresskill, NJ.: Hampton (forthcoming).

Miron, L.F., & Brooks, C.(1993). Great expectations: A critical analysis of the lessons of a grassroot movement to reform an urban school board. The International Journal of School Reform, 2(3), 242-248.

Miron, L. F., & Elliott, R. J., (1990). The moral exercise of power: Post-structural implications for school administration. Review Journal of Philosophy and Social Science. 16 (1): 31-42.

Miron, L. F., & Elliott, R. J. (1994). Moral leadership in a poststructural era. In S. Maxcy (Ed.), Postmodern school leadership: Meeting the crisis in educational administration. Westport, CN: Praeger.

Miron, L.F., & Wimpelberg, R. (1989).A typology of school-business partnerships. Administrators Notebook, 33(1), 1-4.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Osborne, D., & Gaebler, T. (1992). Reinventing government. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Pokaweitz, T. (1991). A Political sociology of educational reform.

New York: Teachers College Press.

Ryan, T. (1994). Study of New Orleans City Revenues. New Orleans City Council.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (1989). A Look at school-based management. Insights, (6), 1-4.

St. John, E., Miron, L.F., & Davidson, B. (1992). Teacher inquiry and school transformation: An examination of exemplary schools. Louisiana Social Studies Journal, 24 (1), 9-16.

Tyack, D. (1974). The one best system. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, W. J. (1987). The truly disadvantaged. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.